

ENVIRONMENT AND ATTRACTIVE CITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

11 APRIL 2011

Performance Report Quarter 3 (April – December 2010)

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND THE DIRECTOR OF CITY SERVICES

Strategic Priorities: Attractive and Inclusive City

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of this report is to provide Environment and Attractive City Scrutiny Committee with a performance update relating to the period April to December 2010. This quarter the report includes:

- Progress in relation to the LAA targets and other national indicators
- Results of the annual budget consultation

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Performance against the national indicators, particularly those identified as priorities identified in the LAA and associated improvement targets have been reported to Scrutiny Committee throughout 2010/11 as part of the quarterly performance monitoring arrangements. The LAA priorities have been a key consideration in terms of the extent to which the partnership is improving outcomes for local people. In October 2010 the Government announced that it was putting Local Authorities fully in control of Local Area Agreements. Enabling Authorities and their partners to amend or drop any of the current LAA targets without needing ministerial agreement. Where it is chosen to keep the targets, Government will have no role in monitoring them. Local Authorities will not be required to prepare an LAA from April 2011, once the current regime expires. The Government also announced the replacement of the National Indicator set with a single, comprehensive list of all data that local government will be required to provide.

2.2 As a consequence the performance framework is being reviewed to reflect the requirements of the new governments self regulation and improvement agenda as part of the strategic planning process for 2011/12. The new framework will form the basis of performance reports to members from July 2011. This is the last performance report that will focus on the LAA and national indicator performance

2.3 The annual budget consultation took place during October/November 2010. The consultation took the form of a survey followed by participatory workshops which were held across Sunderland with Community Spirit panel members and representatives from the voluntary and community sector. The findings helped to inform the Council Revenue Budget for 2011/2012 which was approved on 2 March 2011 at a meeting of the full Council. A summary of how resources will be directed

to the top priorities identified in relation to recycling and refuse collection, roads and footways and clean streets can be found in section 3.

3.0 FINDINGS

3.1 Consultation

The annual budget consultation took place during October / November 2010. It included a survey and workshops, both of which focused on nine areas of priority. These were identified by listening to the views of local people and taking into account other priorities, such as those identified by government or through inspections of council services.

For each of the nine areas of priority, the questionnaire asked whether:

- The priority has got better, worse or stayed the same in the last 12 months
- It should be a priority for 2011/12
- There is anything else we can do to address the priority area.

834 Community Spirit panel members took part which represents a response rate of 59%. An additional 32 residents completed the survey online bringing the total to 866.

Below is a summary of the findings from the survey and workshops and how the council is responding to priority areas.

Refuse and recycling collection

Views towards the refuse and recycling collection are positive with 67% of respondents who expressed an opinion believing it has got better over the last year.

Better	67%
Stayed the same	30%
Worse	2%

A further 30% believe it has stayed the same and only 2% think it is worse. Respondents from East Sunderland are less likely to think it has got better (58%) and more likely to think it has stayed the same (39%).

The majority of respondents (84%) agree that refuse collection should be a priority for the year ahead and only 2% disagree.

Respondents were asked what, if anything else, can be done to improve refuse collection and 485 gave responses. The most popular responses are positive comments about the service in general (102 respondents). A further 38 responses relate to satisfaction with the blue bin/recycling collection. There are however 61 comments about the need to increase/extend recycling.

Seventy responses are about changing the frequency of collections – this includes moving to fortnightly collections (30 respondents), maintaining or increasing existing collections (13 respondents) making blue bin collections weekly and green bins fortnightly (11 respondents) and having weekly blue bin collections (8 respondents).

The findings correspond with the workshop feedback. A number of groups were positive about refuse collection and the new blue bins for recycling and on the whole groups were positive about fortnightly bin collections, although there were

some concerns about families being able to cope and possible fly-tipping. Other popular survey responses relate to:

- The need to clean up after bin collections - 34 respondents
- Preferences for different numbers or sizes of bins - 24 respondents
- More encouragement to recycle for example through publicity, education, rewards etc - 22 respondents

Below is a summary of how we are addressing the priority areas and in particular the issues raised in the survey and workshops.

Refuse collection is the highest rated service the council provides in terms of customer satisfaction. The recycling and refuse collection management structure has been redesigned, resulting in a less costly structure. A new computer system is being used to organise collection routes better and to improve assisted collections, general efficiency and safety.

The roll out of blue bin recycling service started in the spring of 2010 and was completed before Christmas. The new service has proved extremely popular, with participation being much higher than with the previous black box. Public satisfaction with recycling services is rising as a result. We expect to collect around 5,000 tonnes more of material in 2010/11 compared to the previous year, an increase of 50%. It is expected that this will rise further in 2011/12 as the service will be in operation across the city for a full year.

In 2011/12 we plan to improve the recycling services for flats by providing containers for the same range of materials as the blue bin including cardboard.

Roads and footways

Over half (53%) of respondents who expressed an opinion think that the condition of roads and footways has got worse over the last 12 months, this compares to 39% last year. A further 38% think they have stayed the same and 10% think they have got better. Respondents aged 18-44 are more positive than other age groups about roads and footpaths with 15% thinking they are better and 42% worse.

The majority of respondents (83%) think that road and footpath maintenance should be a priority for the year ahead and only 3% disagree. Respondents aged 65-74 are more likely to agree (90%) than other age groups whereas those aged 18-44 are less likely to agree (72%) and more likely to respond 'neither'. Females are also slightly more likely to agree than males (86% compared to 80%).

Five hundred and twenty-three respondents gave comments in relation to what else can be done to improve roads and footways. The most popular responses relate to the need for more or better repairs/maintenance - in general (57 respondents), of footpaths (79 respondents), of roads (59 respondents) and in relation to potholes (79 respondents). There are also a number of comments around the bad weather effects on roads and footpaths (63 respondents). Other popular comments relate to:

- Preventing parking on pavements - 33 respondents
- Improving reporting/response mechanisms, including for example an email or telephone hotline - 31 respondents

- Problems caused by utility companies - 30 respondents
- The need for a better inspection programme - 27 respondents

Correspondingly, the condition of roads and footpaths was discussed by some groups at the workshops in terms of potholes in roads and trip hazards caused by uneven footpaths. Causes mentioned include the bad winter, parking and poor reinstatement by utility companies.

Below is a summary of how we are addressing the priority areas and in particular the issues raised in the survey and workshops.

Significant investment has been made in recent years on roads and footpaths and conditions are good compared to other councils (as measured by central government). Severe winter conditions however continue to impact on the road conditions and in particular potholes and the consultation has confirmed residents concerns. The focus will therefore be on highways maintenance of these local problems rather than large scale resurfacing schemes.

Clean streets

Of those who expressed an opinion, the majority of respondents (65%) believe that the state of streets has stayed the same over the last 12 months. The remainder believe they have got cleaner (19%) and dirtier (16%). Those with a disability are more likely to think streets have got dirtier (23%) and less likely to think they have stayed the same (58%).

Cleaner	19%
Stayed the same	65%
Dirtier	16%

The majority of respondents (80%) agree that clean streets should be a priority for the year ahead and only 6% disagree. Those respondents aged 18-44 are less likely to agree than other age groups (65%) and more likely to respond 'neither' whereas those aged 55+ are more likely to agree (87%).

Respondents were asked what, if anything else, can be done to make Sunderland's streets cleaner and 628 gave responses. The most popular response is in relation to fines and enforcement activity (183 respondents). This is for issues such as dog fouling, littering and fly-tipping. A number of respondents feel that local people should take responsibility for their own environment (49 respondents) and 48 respondents believe that retailers such as takeaways should take more responsibility. Issues around enforcement, education and accountability of retailers were also raised at the workshops.

There are also a number of responses in relation to bins - the need for more litter bins (113 respondents) and dog waste bins (23 respondents) and to empty bins more regularly (24 respondents). Other popular comments include the need for more education (particularly of young people) and campaigns / publicity around the issues (82 respondents), the need for more street cleaning (60 respondents) and related to this the possibility of using the unemployed and offenders to clean up (25 respondents).

Below is a summary of how we are addressing the priority areas and in particular the issues raised in the survey and workshops.

The council has introduced a new way of working to provide services such as street cleansing, grass cutting and environmental enforcement called 'Responsive Local Services'. This means that local teams will work with councillors, partners (such as Gendarmes and Northumbria Police) and residents to identify and tackle local issues and priorities in each of the five areas of Sunderland.

The council has fifteen environmental enforcement officers working in Responsive Local Services proactively tackling issues like dog fouling, litter dropping and fly tipping. The council's approach to environmental enforcement is to educate and encourage but take formal action where it is appropriate.

We plan to carry out an environmental education campaign in 2011/12 raising awareness of environmental problems and the responsibilities that everyone has in keeping the city clean and green. This will highlight the responsibilities of individuals and businesses. We will also continue to issue fixed penalty notices for environmental offences including littering and dog fouling and pursue prosecutions when necessary. Since April 2010 we have issued 324 fixed penalty notices and made 116 successful court applications.

We will also explore the potential of working with partners such as the Youth Offending and Probation services to see how offenders might be able to support Responsive Local Services.

We will be reviewing arrangements for grass cutting, focusing activity on those areas which are most used, and improving the bio-diversity (number and variety of plants and animals) of some areas by cutting less frequently.

3.2 Performance

A full overview of performance can be found at appendix 1. The following section contains an overview of performance.

Recycling and Street Cleaning

The percentage of household waste arisings sent for refuse, recycling, composting or treatment by anaerobic digestion has improved when compared to the same period the previous year. From 29.08% in December 2009 to 32.25% in December 2010, based on current performance it is anticipated that the target of 32% will be achieved.

The percentage of relevant land and highways that is assessed as having deposits of litter, deposits of detritus and levels of graffiti that fall below an acceptable level have all declined when compared to the same period the previous year. For deposits of litter performance declined from 2% in November 2009 to 5% in November 2010. However, despite the decline in performance it is still likely that the target of 8% will be achieved. Deposits of detritus declined from 4% in November 2009 to 14% in November 2010, based on current performance it is not anticipated that the target of 6% will be achieved. Increased levels of detritus recorded during the last survey relate directly to the amount of grit and salt spread during winter weather maintenance operations. We expect the final survey due in March to show a return to expected levels. Levels of graffiti that fall below an

acceptable level slightly declined from 1% in November 2009 to 2% in November 2010, based on current performance it is likely that the target of 3% will be achieved.

Planning

The percentage of major planning applications dealt with in 13 weeks improved when compared to the same period the previous year. From 80% in December 2009 to 81.82% in December 2010, based on current performance it is likely that the target of 80% will be achieved.

The percentage of minor planning applications dealt with in 8 weeks slightly declined when compared to the same period the previous year. From 96.43% in December 2009 to 96.20% in December 2010, despite the slight decline it is likely that the target of 93.50% will be achieved. The percentage of other planning applications dealt with in 8 weeks declined when compared to the same period the previous year. From 99.07% in December 2009 to 97.98% in December 2010, despite the decline it is likely that the target of 98% will be achieved. Despite the slight decline we have once again seen a high level of performance delivered by the Development Control team, with support from other planning sections. This has been achieved in the context of a reduced workforce and a mounting new additional workload arising out of application enquiries yet still producing performance figures that are the highest recorded within Tyne and Wear and place the authority within the top quartile (i.e. top 10 authorities in the country) when measured nationally.

Transport and Road Safety

The number of people slightly injured in road traffic collisions has improved when compared to the same period the previous year. From 635 to 588 based on current performance the target of 910 has been achieved.

The number of children (aged under 16 years) killed or seriously injured (KSI) in road traffic collisions has slightly declined when compared to the same period the previous year. From 18 to 11, based on current performance, the target of 17.25 will be achieved. The 10-year target set nationally for the City was met at the completion of this quarter (31st December 2010). That target was 23 and the actual was 22 in the 12 months ended December 2010

The Accident Investigation and Prevention Programme will be undertaken with the intention of reducing KSI accidents involving children. The number of KSI's is already relatively low across the City therefore accident reduction through engineering works in this area will be difficult. Works planned for 2011/12 include development of projects identified within the Sustainable Modes of Transport Strategy particularly relating to school access. There is an intention to liaise closely with those schools that have most recently completed School Travel Plans. In the past this would have led to school being given grants for a number of initiatives including improving school access arrangements and provision of cycle sheds within the school grounds. It is hoped that through contact with these schools that minor schemes and improvements outside the school boundaries can be identified and potentially funded through the Capital programme

Appendix 1 provides an overview of the position for relevant national indicators and also any local performance indicators that have been retained to supplement areas in the performance framework that are not well covered by the national indicator set.

4.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 That the Committee considers the continued good progress made by the council and the Sunderland Partnership and those areas requiring further development to ensure that performance is actively managed.

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